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ADDRESS  
AT THE  
UNVEILING OF THE STATUE  
OF  
ALEXANDER HAMILTON  
IN THE  
CITY OF PATERSON, NEW JERSEY  
MAY 30, 1907

BY  
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The large cities of the world are to be found where they are for good and sufficient reasons. We learn from historians and geographers what those reasons are. They tell us that in the ancient world and in the modern world alike, men first gathered themselves together in communities at points where protection and self-defense were easy, or where commerce and industry were likely to develop with least obstacle or interference. A high hill or rock surmounted by a castle, about the walls of which the dependents of the feudal lord might gather, explains the existence of many a European town to-day. The mouths of navigable rivers, the proximity of sources of natural wealth, or convenient centers for distribution of supplies to more sparsely settled sections of the land, account for still other cities and towns. Occasionally we find that the site of a city has been deliberately chosen in order that a definite public policy may be carried out thereby. Such a city, the manner of the choosing of its site, and the purposes of those who were chiefly concerned in the choosing, become matters of unusual interest to the reader of history.

In the United States there are at least two city sites which were deliberately chosen in pursuance of certain public ends. Both were chosen, or their choosing was made possible, by one and the same man. Both were chosen as part of one and the same policy—the building of the American people into a strong nation which should be both politically and industrially independent. These two city sites are that of Washington, selected to be the political capital of the new nation, and that of Paterson, selected to be its industrial capital. The man behind the

choice in each case was he whose name and fame we are gathered to honor—Alexander Hamilton. It is worth while to dwell for a few moments upon the man and the policies which called Paterson into existence.

It was a part of Alexander Hamilton's statesmanship that the capital city of the new nation was Washington on the banks of the Potomac. To secure the assumption by the national government of the war debt of the separate states, and so to hold the infant commonwealths together in a new and stout bond, he allowed the capital city to be fixed at the spot where the local pride of some of his chief opponents desired it to be. It was equally a part of Hamilton's statesmanship that the city of Paterson was called into being on the banks of the Passaic. The same engineer who laid out the political capital drew the original plans for the industrial capital. Those plans, unfortunately, demanded the resources of a principality for their execution, and they came to naught. Had they been carried out, Colt's Hill yonder, now leveled to the ground, would have been, as Capitol Hill is in Washington, the center from which great avenues radiated through the industrial city of L'Enfant's imagination. Six miles square the city was to be, and the new world was to assert itself in industry, as in politics, from a capital seat. The plan was as striking as it was novel, and worthy of the political genius who conceived it.

Why was Alexander Hamilton interested in building an industrial capital for the new nation, and in selecting its site?

The answer is to be found in the encyclopedic character of Hamilton's interests and in the broad sweep of his statesmanship. In the eighteenth century the outlying parts of the world were looked upon by the older and controlling nations not only as political dependencies, but as industrial annexes. They were to grow and provide the raw materials of commerce and industry, which raw materials, whether dug from the ground or grown in the earth, were to be shipped to the motherland for manufacture, and shipped back again to the dependencies for purchase and consumption as finished products. Hamilton knew perfectly well that the independence of

the United States was only partially achieved when the political shackles which bound the colonists to King George were broken. He knew that the people must be industrially independent as well, if their nation was to endure. He believed that the factory and the farm, the mine and the workshop, should be brought side by side, that through a diversity of employment and an economy of transportation charge, the economic prosperity of the people might be assured and advanced.

As soon as Hamilton had secured the adoption of the Constitution, and even before he had, under the Constitution, riveted the bonds which held the states together by having the nation assume the separate state debts, he set about the task of building up diversified domestic industries.

On January 15, 1790, the House of Representatives called upon Hamilton, then Secretary of the Treasury, for a report upon the subject of manufactures, to deal particularly with the means of promoting those manufactures that would tend to render the United States independent of foreign nations for military and other essential supplies. On December 5, 1791, at the age of thirty-four, Hamilton responded to this request with a report which is both an economic and a political classic. Not only does he consider and pass in review the arguments advanced for and against the policy of building up domestic manufactures, if necessary by government aid, but he tells the House of Representatives precisely what manufactures had already been undertaken in the United States and what measure of success might be expected to attend them. In the course of this remarkable report, Hamilton announced that a society was forming, with a sufficient capital, which was to prosecute, on a large scale, the making and printing of cotton goods. The society to which Hamilton referred was the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures, which Society had been already constituted a body politic and corporate by the Legislature of the State of New Jersey in an Act passed November 22, 1791, or only a few days earlier than the date of Hamilton's report on manufactures. The Act relating to this Society provided in

its twenty-sixth section that, since it was deemed important to the success of the undertaking, provision should be made for incorporating, with the consent of the inhabitants, such district, not exceeding six miles square, as might become the principal city of the intended establishment, which district should, when certain conditions were complied with, be the town of Paterson.

Therefore, it may with justice be said that the town of Paterson was called into existence by Alexander Hamilton in pursuance of his policy of securing industrial independence for the people of the United States. Though his immediate plans were never carried out, yet cotton, flax, and silk, iron and steel, copper and brass, have since his day given employment here to tens of thousands of intelligent workmen. Hamilton's policy succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of his imagination. Not one industrial capital, but hundreds, have sprung into existence to demonstrate its wisdom and effectiveness. From the looms of the Merrimac to those of the Piedmont, from the forges and furnaces of Pittsburgh to those of Colorado and beyond, scores of busy hives of industry bear tribute to the greatness of the man whose conscious purpose it was to make our nation strong enough to rule itself and strong enough to face the world with honest pride in its own strength.

When, because of the water power afforded by the great falls of the Passaic, the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures chose this spot as its site, it was a part of the township of Acquackanonk, and but an insignificant handful of people were living here. The records say that the total number of houses was not over ten. Out of these small beginnings the present busy city has grown. Hamilton's interest in it was personal and very strong. The records of the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures show plainly enough that he attended the early meetings of the Directors, and make it highly probable that not only did he draw the act of incorporation itself, but guided the Society in its early policies as well. So we commemorate to-day not only a far-seeing statesman, who has forever associated his name with this spot, but a pur-



pose which has long since become part of the accepted policy of the people of the United States. Because of Hamilton's conspicuous public service, it would be becoming for his statue to stand in every city in the land; but if there is one city more than another in which it must stand, that city is Paterson.

It is not easy for us to picture accurately the political and social conditions which prevailed when the government of the United States was created. Looking back as we do upon the achievement as one of epoch-marking significance in the world's history, and seeing as we do the outlines of the great figures who participated in the work silhouetted against the background of the past, it is difficult to appreciate against what tremendous obstacles they labored and with what bitter antagonisms they were forced to fight. If the history of the American Revolution and that of the building of the nation show human nature at its best, they also show it at its worst. Over against a Franklin, a Washington, and a Hamilton we must set the scurrilous pamphleteers, the selfish particularists, and the narrow-minded politicians whose joint machinations it required almost infinite patience, infinite tact, and infinite wisdom to overcome. The greatness of Washington himself, marvelous as his achievements are now seen to be, rests in no small part upon what he put up with. A nature less great than his, a temper less serene, could not have failed to show resentment and anger at a time when either passion would have been dangerous to the cause in whose service his whole nature was enlisted.

We are accustomed to think of the political controversies of our own day as bitter, and of the political methods which accompany them as base and dishonorable. The bitterness, the baseness, and the dishonor of to-day are as nothing in comparison with the bitterness, the baseness, and the dishonor with which the great fathers of the nation were compelled to deal. Upon the devoted head of Washington himself was heaped every sort and kind of obloquy. Hamilton was called

alternately a monarchist and a thief, a liar and a traitor. Men stopped at nothing to gain their political ends, and the writings of not a few of our country's great men abound in passages and records which bring the blush of shame to the cheek.

This nation of ours was not built easily or in a day. The materials used in the structure were themselves refractory, and the arduous task of putting them together was time-consuming. The Constitutional Convention itself was in a sense a subterfuge of Hamilton's and the outgrowth of a purely commercial conference, at which the representatives of but five states were gathered, so difficult was it to unite the states for any purpose. The maxims of the French Revolution were in the air, and Jefferson was playing with them, now as idols, now as weapons. Men were swept off their feet by the power of formulas and phrases, and hard, clear thinking on the fundamental principles of politics and government was by no means so common as we are in the habit of supposing it was.

To understand the history of the United States, we must realize that the nation has had two births: the first, its birth to union under Washington and Hamilton; the second, its birth to liberty under Lincoln. Our nation was not really made until the second birth was an accomplished fact. It is as absurd to speak of the United States as being the creation of the year 1776 or 1789 as it would be to speak of England as the creation of the year in which Hengist and Horsa first landed on its eastern coast. The birth throes of the United States of America began on the day when

"The embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard round the world."

They only ended when two brave Americans, whose consciences had brought them to place different and antagonistic meanings upon the structure of the government, met face to face at Appomattox to "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks."

In the long and difficult process of nation-building, five great

builders stand out above all others by reason of the supreme service that they rendered. Their places in the American pantheon are secure. Two were from Virginia, one from New York, one from New England, and one from the West. The five are Washington, Hamilton, Marshall, Webster, and Lincoln. The placid and almost superhuman genius of Washington, exhibited alike in war and in peace, made the beginnings possible. The constructive statesmanship, the tireless energy, and the persuasive eloquence of Hamilton laid the foundations and pointed the way. The judicial expositions of Marshall erected the legal superstructure. The powerful and illuminating arguments of Webster instructed public opinion and prepared it to stand the terrible strain soon to be put upon it in the struggle for the maintenance of the union. The human insight, the skill, and the infinite, sad patience of Lincoln carried the work to its end.

Others have served the people of the United States, and served them well. Others have been great party leaders, admirable judges, far-sighted statesmen; but to these five—Washington, Hamilton, Marshall, Webster, and Lincoln—must be accorded the first and foremost place. To them, more than to any others, we owe the United States as we know it.

Of these five nation-builders, Hamilton was in some respects the most remarkable. Talleyrand, no mean judge, placed him on a par with the greatest European statesmen of his time, including even Pitt and Fox—a judgment more obviously moderate now than when it was made. Hamilton's genius was not only amazingly precocious, but it was really genius. His first report on the public credit and his report on manufactures, two of the greatest state papers in the English language, were the work of a young man of but thirty-three or thirty-four. The political pamphlets of his boyhood, the military papers and reports of his youth, would do credit to experienced age. In his forty-seven years, Hamilton lived the life of generations of ordinary men. From the restless boyhood years on the distant island in the Caribbean Sea through the stirring scenes

of his student days in Columbia College; from the worried camp of Washington where, the merest stripling, he was clothed with heavy military responsibility, to his years of active practice in the courts, instructing the judges and illuminating the law; from the arduous work in the Constitutional Convention, a statesman trying to piece a nation together out of fragments, to his ceaseless labors with voice and pen to persuade a reluctant people to accept the new government as their own; into the Cabinet as its presiding genius and to the busy Treasury where everything had to be created from an audit system and a mint to a nation's income; back into private life in name but in fact to the exercise of new power; all the way on to the fatal field at Weehawken, where, in obedience to a false and futile sense of honor, he gave up his life to the bullet of a political adversary, the story of Hamilton's life is full of dramatic interest and intensity. He represented the highest type of human product, a great intellect driven for high purposes by an imperious will. Facts, not phrases, were his counters; principle, not expediency, was his guide.

In all his career, Hamilton seems to have yielded but once to the temptation to use a local or a party interest, and then he made use of the local or party interest of his opponents. That was when he yielded to the sentiment to place the capital on the banks of the Potomac, in order to gain the votes needed to pass his Assumption bill. On no other occasion, whether when exerting his powers of persuasion to the utmost in the face of an adverse majority in the New York Convention called to consider the ratification of the Constitution, or in his extraordinary appeals through the *Federalist*, or in the letters of Camillus written in defense of the Jay treaty, did he ever descend from the lofty heights of political principle. That is the reason why Hamilton's reports, his letters, and his speeches belong to the permanent literature of political science. The occasion for which he wrote was of the moment, but the mood in which he wrote and his method belong to the ages.

Hamilton's policy had three ends in view. He wished to develop a financial policy that would bind the Union hard and

fast; an industrial policy that would make it rich and, within the bounds of possibility, self-sufficient; and a foreign policy that would strengthen the political and economic independence already provided for. He accomplished them all, and all three are securely part of the permanent policy of the nation. Hamilton's statesmanship could have no higher tribute than this. He built not for the day, but for the nation's history.

The little lion, as his friends affectionately called him, proved his greatness in yet another way. He put aside the acclaim and applause of his contemporaries that he might serve their children and their children's children, by laying broad and deep and strong the foundations of one of the great nations of the world. It would have been easy for Hamilton with his personal charm, his alertness of mind, and his geniality of temper, to have been the idol of the populace of his time. But he was wise enough to know how cheap and tawdry a thing popularity is when principle and lasting usefulness have to be surrendered in return for it. To-day Hamilton has his reward. By common consent he is now recognized not only as one of the very greatest of all Americans, but as a statesman whom the whole world is glad to honor for the political insight and sagacity that he displayed, for the marvelous range of his intellectual interests, for the philosophic structure of his mind, and for the imperishable service that he rendered to the cause of popular government everywhere.

To an old and valued friend, Edward Carrington of Virginia, Hamilton wrote an important letter in 1792. That letter states two essential points of his political creed to be, "first, the necessity of Union to the respectability and happiness of this country; and second, the necessity of an efficient general government to maintain the Union." He adds: "I am affectionately attached to the republican theory. I desire above all things to see the equality of political rights, exclusive of all hereditary distinction, firmly established by a practical demonstration of its being consistent with the order and happiness of society." The enemy which he most feared for his country was the spirit of faction and anarchy. "If this



will not permit the ends of government to be attained under it," he adds, "if it engenders disorders in the community, all regular and orderly minds will wish for a change, and the demagogues who have produced the disorder will make it for their own aggrandizement. This is the old story. If I were disposed to promote monarchy and overthrow State governments, I would mount the hobby-horse of popularity; I would cry out 'usurpation,' 'danger to liberty,' etc., etc.; I would endeavor to prostrate the national government, raise a ferment, and then 'ride in the whirlwind, and direct the storm.'"

These words are both prophecy and history. They are a warning against the demagogue from one who was surrounded by them, little and big. They put us on our guard against the worst tendencies in others, as well as against the worst passions in ourselves.

Hamilton's achievements are beyond our reach, but the lessons of his life are not hard for us to learn. The never-absent care for the public interest, the superb energy with which he pressed his policies upon the attention of the people, the unfailing regard for political principle, the grasp of concrete facts of every sort, the undaunted courage of the man, mark Hamilton as an ideal public servant and public official. "He never lost sight of your interests," said Gouverneur Morris in his funeral oration to the people who thronged about the murdered leader's bier. "Though he was compelled to abandon public life," added Morris, "never, no, never for a moment did he abandon the public service." No higher praise could be given to a public man.

The ebb and flow of the huge human tide which comes and goes at the meeting point of two of the most crowded and busiest streets in the world, surges daily past the tomb in Trinity churchyard where lie the ashes of the statesman, too great to be a successful party leader, to whom the United States of America owe an incalculable debt. Imagination tempts us to wonder how much of this great population and how much of the active business and financial strength that

this human tide represents, would be in existence if Hamilton had not lived, or if his policies had not been accepted by the people of the United States. No man, we say, is indispensable. In a certain sense this must be true; for the universe does not hang on a single personality. But is it not equally true, that great personalities do shape the course of events, and that if there had been no Hamilton, no *Federalist*, and no reports on the public credit and on manufactures, the history of the people of the United States might have been, indeed would certainly have been, very different? That history might still have been a proud one and the people themselves a great and successful people; but the nation as we know and love it, the nation that stood the strain of the greatest of civil wars, the nation that has stretched across mountains and prairies and plains to the shores of a second ocean, the nation that has resisted every attempt to debase its currency and to impair its credit, the nation that is not afraid of permitting individual citizens to exert their powers to the utmost if only they injure no one of their fellows,—that is the nation which Hamilton's vision foresaw and for which the labor of his life was given.







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